



February 13, 2019

Representative John Lively, Chair
House Committee on Economic Development
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for the Oregon Innovation Council (Oregon InC)

Dear Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Bonham, Vice-Chair Fahey and Members of the Committee,

Sustainable Northwest is writing in support of the Oregon Innovation Council (Oregon InC) programs administered by the Innovation & Entrepreneurship (I&E) division of the Oregon Business Development Department. Oregon InC provides critical guidance into how best to invest limited dollars to support innovation in Oregon. In addition, Oregon InC provides critical funding for early-stage companies trying to commercialize technology and create the next generation of Oregon businesses. We can attest to the fact that funding for businesses at this stage is very difficult to find, and Oregon InC's programs play an essential and desperately needed function to fill these gaps.

Sustainable Northwest is a regional non-profit that works with rural and urban communities to develop new models of natural resource governance, investment, and stewardship to achieve a healthy environment and prosperous economy in the West. We have recently partnered with and received funding from Oregon InC under their High Impact Opportunity Project (HIOP) program to support economic development and innovation in strategic industry sectors in Oregon. This work is contributing to the commercialization and growth of the Western Juniper wood products industry in Oregon. This work will maintain and create 65 jobs in isolated rural communities across the state, enhance agricultural production and rangeland restoration, and generate economic value for a new green building material that had previously been viewed as a waste product.

Oregon InC's programs help ensure that Oregon's entrepreneurs are not at a disadvantage compared to their peers in other states that have similar types of support programs. In addition, Oregon InC's funding leverages private investment and federal government grants, which magnifies its impact on Oregon's start-up community. The funds we have received from the HIOP program have already been matched more than 1:1 with public and private funds, significantly enhancing the state's investment and supporting the development of a self-sustaining industry and entrepreneurs that will be prepared to receive commercial financing in the future. Furthermore, we have found the staff and administration at Oregon InC to be responsive and thoughtful partners willing to work in close collaboration with entrepreneurs and business development entities to achieve the mission of their programs. We are

strong supporters of Oregon InC and its programs and will continue to work with the Council and the I&E division in the coming biennium to help Oregon's entrepreneurs be as successful as possible.

We strongly encourage the Legislature to continue to fund this critical effort. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Block', written in a cursive style.

Greg Block
President
Sustainable Northwest